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ABSTRACT

Only when everyone on campus, particularly academic affairs and student affairs staff, shares the responsibility for student learning will significant progress be made. This paper presents insights on learning and the implications for pedagogy, curricula, learning environments, and assessments. Details are given of ten principles that are illustrated by a set of exemplary cooperative practices that bring together academic and student affairs professionals to make a difference in the quality of student learning. A summary of the principles state that: (1) learning is about making and maintaining connections; (2) learning is enhanced by taking place in the context of a compelling situation that balances challenge and opportunity; (3) learning is an active search for meaning by the learner; (4) learning is developmental; (5) learning is done by individuals who are intrinsically tied to others as social beings; (6) learning is affected by the educational climate in which it takes place; (7) learning requires frequent feedback if it is to be sustained; (8) much learning takes place informally and incidentally; (9) learning is grounded in particular contexts and individual experiences; and (10) learning involves the ability of individuals to monitor their own learning. Examples of exemplary programs at colleges and university throughout the country are provided under each principle. (JDM)

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Powerful Partnerships

A Shared Responsibility for Learning

A Joint Report

American Association for Higher Education
American College Personnel Association
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

June 1998

CG 029995

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Despite American higher education's success at providing collegiate education for an unprecedented number of people, the vision of equipping all our students with learning deep enough to meet the challenges of the post-industrial age provides us with a powerful incentive to do our work better. People collaborate when the job they face is too big, is too urgent, or requires too much knowledge for one person or group to do alone. Marshalling what we know about learning and applying it to the education of our students is just such a job. This report makes the case that only when everyone on campus — particularly academic affairs and student affairs staff—shares the responsibility for student learning will we be able to make significant progress in improving it.

Collectively, we know a lot about learning. A host of faculty, staff, and institutional initiatives undertaken since the mid-80s and supported by colleges and universities, foundations, government, and other funding sources have resulted in a stream of improvement efforts related to teaching, curriculum, assessment, and learning environments. The best practices from those innovations and reforms mirror what scholars from a variety of disciplines, from neurobiology to psychology, tell us about the nature of learning. Exemplary practices are also shaped by the participants' particular experiences as learners and educators, which is why a program cannot simply be adopted but must be adapted to a new environment.

Despite these examples, most colleges and universities do not use our collective wisdom as well as they should. To do so requires a commitment to and support for action that goes beyond the individual faculty or staff member. Distracted by other responsibilities and isolated from others from whom they could learn about learning and who would support them, most people on campus contribute less effectively to the development of students' understanding than they might. It is only by acting cooperatively in the context of common goals, as the most innovative institutions have done, that our accumulated understanding about learning is put to best use.

There is another reason to work collaboratively to deepen student learning. Learning is a social activity, and modeling is one of the most powerful learning

tools. As participants in organizations dedicated to learning, we have a responsibility to model for students how to work together on behalf of our shared mission and to learn from each other.

On behalf of such collaboration, we, the undersigned members of this Joint Task Force on Student Learning, offer the following report. It begins with a statement of the insights gained through the scholarly study of learning and their implications for pedagogy, curricula, learning environments, and assessment. Each principle is illustrated by a set of exemplary cooperative practices that bring together academic and student affairs professionals to make a difference in the quality of student learning, a difference that has been assessed and documented. The report ends with a call to all involved in higher education to reflect upon these findings and examples in conjunction with their own and their colleagues' experience and to draw on all these sources of knowledge as the basis for actions to promote higher student achievement.

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Powerful Partnerships
A Shared Responsibility for Learning

The following ten principles about learning and how to strengthen it are drawn from research and practice and provide grounds for deliberation and action. All those who participate in the educational mission of institutions of higher education — students, faculty, and staff — share responsibility for pursuing learning improvements. Collaborations between academic and student affairs personnel and organizations have been especially effective in achieving this better learning for students. We advocate these partnerships as the best way to realize fully the benefits of the findings.

Learning Principles and Collaborative Action

1 Learning is fundamentally about *making and maintaining connections*: biologically through neural networks; mentally among concepts, ideas, and meanings; and experientially through interaction between the mind and the environment, self and other, generality and context, deliberation and action.

Rich learning experiences and environments require and enable students to *make connections:*

- through **learning materials** that stimulate comparisons and associations, explore relationships, evaluate alternative perspectives and solutions, and challenge students to draw conclusions from evidence;
- through opportunities to **relate** their **own experience** and knowledge **to materials** being learned;
- through **pedagogies** emphasizing critical analysis of conflicting views and demanding that students make defensible judgments about and demonstrate linkages among bodies of knowledge;
- through **curricula** integrating ideas and themes within and across fields of knowledge and establishing coherence among learning experiences within and beyond the classroom; and
- through **classroom** experiences **integrated with** purposeful **activities outside of class.**

To **make and maintain connections**, faculty and staff collaborators design learning experiences that:

- expose students to alternative world views and culturally diverse perspectives;
- give students responsibility for solving problems and resolving conflicts;
- make explicit the relationships among parts of the curriculum and between the curriculum and other aspects of the collegiate experience; and
- deliberately personalize interventions appropriate to individual students' circumstances and needs.

University of Maryland, College Park offers the College Park Scholars program, a two-year living/learning opportunity for freshmen and sophomores. Students reside and attend most of their classes within residence hall communities. Residence life staff, faculty, and other program staff offices are in the halls. Student scholars live on floors corresponding to thematically linked academic programs. For participating commuting students, access is provided to common areas in host residence halls. The thematic programs **deliberately connect** what the students learn in the classroom to the larger world through weekly colloquia, discussion groups, and field trips dealing with related issues.

The scholars program has improved recruitment and retention of talented undergraduates and has provided an enriched learning experience and a more personalized and human scale to campus life. Faculty offices and classrooms within the residence halls lead to enhanced interaction with faculty.

At University of Missouri, Kansas City, Supplemental Instruction and Video-Based Supplemental Instruction help students **make connections.** Supplemental Instruction uses peer-assisted study sessions to increase student academic performance and student retention in historically difficult academic courses. In the sessions, students learn how to integrate course content and develop reasoning and study strategies, facilitated by student leaders who have previously succeeded in these courses and who are trained in study strategies and peer collaborative learning techniques. The video-based program offers an alternative course delivery system. Faculty offer courses on videotape and students enroll in a video section. A facilitator guides review of the video lectures, stopping the tapes in mid-lecture to engage in class discussions, integration, and practice of learning strategies.

More than three hundred studies nationally have documented the impact of supplemental instruction, demonstrating its special impact on students with weak academic preparation. The U.S. Department of Education designated supplemental instruction as an Exemplary Education Program in 1982, noting its ability to increase academic achievement and college graduation rates among students. Program staff at UMKC have further investigated the effects of this instruction through the study of neurological processes. Using a Quantitative

Electroencephalography instrument, they have found evidence of improved brain electrical activity in students who participate in the programs.

2 Learning is enhanced by *taking place in* the context of *a compelling situation* that balances challenge and opportunity, stimulating and utilizing the brain's ability to conceptualize quickly and its capacity and need for contemplation and reflection upon experiences.

Presenting students with *compelling situations* amplifies the learning process. Students learn more when they are:

- asked to tackle complex and compelling **problems that invite** them to develop an array of workable and innovative **solutions**;
- asked to produce **work** that will be **shared** with multiple audiences;
- offered opportunities for **active application of skills and abilities** and **time for contemplation**; and
- placed in **settings** where they can **draw upon past knowledge and competencies** while adapting to new circumstances.

To **create compelling situations**, faculty and staff collaborators:

- articulate and enforce high standards of student behavior inside and outside the classroom;
- give students increasing responsibility for leadership;
- create environments and schedules that encourage intensive activity as well as opportunities for quiet deliberation; and
- establish internships, externships, service-learning, study abroad, and workplace-based learning experiences.

The First-Year Experience at the College of New Jersey is a collaboration between General Education and Student Life. Students live in residence hall communities with a volunteer non-resident faculty fellow for each floor. Faculty fellows, student life staff, and students plan residence hall activities. Students also take an interdisciplinary core course, *Athens to New York,* taught by full-time faculty and selected student life staff in residence hall classrooms, and incorporating service-learning. Four questions drive the mission of the First-Year Experience: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a member of a community? What does it mean to be moral, ethical, and just? and How do communities respond to differences? Service-learning provides a **compelling situation** in which students can confront complex social issues, apply their talents to marginalized communities, interact and work with diverse populations, and enhance their career preparation.

Student service-learning journals show a clear understanding of the work of the course and its objectives and core questions. Community agency staff provide feedback and guidance to students, and the staffs' evaluations offer evidence that students learn about and contribute to their communities. Students express high levels of satisfaction with the residence hall, the classroom experience, workshops, field trips, and enrichment lectures associated with the core course.

Community College of Rhode Island's 2+4 Service on Common Ground Program is part of the college's extensive service-learning activities. Supported by funds from the Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges and the Corporation for National Service to develop service-learning partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions, the college cooperates with Brown University's Center for Public Service. One joint project connects the community college's nursing faculty and students with the university's medical school faculty and students. Students work in many **challenging situations** to meet community needs and discuss and write in journals observations and experiences that relate the activity to their course of study and to social issues.

Student affairs staff began the program with a core team of five faculty. Now the collaborative effort includes some fifty faculty who employ service-learning in more than a dozen academic disciplines.

3 Learning is an *active search for meaning* by the learner — constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving it, shaping as well as being shaped by experiences.

Active participation by the learner is essential for productive learning, dictating that:

- instructional methods **involve students directly** in the discovery of knowledge;
- learning materials challenge students to **transform prior knowledge and experience** into new and deeper understandings;
- students be expected to **take responsibility** for their own learning;
- students be encouraged to **seek meaning** in the context of **ethical values and commitments**; and
- learning be assessed based on students' ability to **demonstrate competencies and use knowledge.**

To stimulate an **active search for meaning,** faculty and staff collaborators:

- expect and demand student participation in activities in and beyond the classroom;
- design projects and endeavors through which students apply their knowledge and skills; and

- build programs that feature extended and increasingly challenging opportunities for growth and development.

Bloomfield College (New Jersey) offers the Student Advancement Initiative, curricular and co-curricular experiences that **develop student competencies** in aesthetic appreciation, communication, citizenship, cultural awareness, problem solving and critical thinking, science and technology, and other professional skills. The program emphasizes computer-aided self-appraisal for students and a student development transcript. The objectives are to **involve students actively** in the assessment process, to provide continuous feedback to students on their progress toward the competencies, and to strengthen programs based on aggregate information about student achievement of the competencies.

Faculty and student affairs joint task forces have defined the competencies and linked them to the general education program. Faculty draw upon student affairs staff expertise in designing course assignments. Student portfolios and assessment information direct students toward self-analysis and synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge gained through the curriculum and through developmental activities. Faculty and staff participate together in "reflective practice" sessions to improve programming and administration.

DePaul University (Illinois) offers two writing-intensive interdisciplinary and experiential programs for new students to ease the transition to the university. All first-year students enroll in either Focal Point or Discover Chicago. Focal Point highlights an important event, person, place, or issue and is taught using a multidisciplinary format. Students also enroll in a "common hour" course where student affairs professionals **help students evaluate their contributions** to shared learning, develop their study and decision-making skills, create a learning plan, and reflect upon the nature of diversity at the university and in the city. Academic and student affairs personnel are involved in curriculum development, the design of classroom experiences, and student learning outside the classroom. Discover Chicago brings new students together a week before the first term for a course team-taught by a faculty member, a professional staff member, and a student mentor. The course investigates a particular topic using the city as a learning site. The work of the course involves readings and discussions, visits to city locations, and a community service project.

Assessments of the programs are designed to determine their impact on student retention and include qualitative and quantitative pre- and post-test surveys, a standardized test (the College Student Inventory) that is a predictor of student retention, syllabi review, and focus groups. Results provide information about retention and staff-faculty partnering, student expectations about the university and coursework, and the nature of assignments and forms of evaluation in each program.

4 Learning is *developmental*, a cumulative process *involving the whole person*, relating past and present, integrating the new with the old, starting from but transcending personal concerns and interests.

The *developmental* nature of learning implies both a holistic and a temporal perspective on the learning process. This suggests that:

- any **single** learning **experience or** instructional **method** has a **lesser** impact **than** the **overall** educational experience;
- **curricula** should be **additive and cumulative, building upon prior understandings and knowledge** toward greater richness and complexity;
- intellectual **growth** is **gradual**, with periods of rapid **advancement followed by time for consolidation,** an extended and episodic process of mutually reinforcing experiences;
- the goals of undergraduate education should include students' **development of an integrated sense of identity**, characterized by high self-esteem and personal integrity that extends beyond the individual to the larger community and world; and
- **assessment of** learning should encompass **all aspects of** the educational **experience.**

To create a **developmental process** integrating all aspects of students' lives, faculty and staff collaborators:

- design educational programs to build progressively on each experience;
- track student development through portfolios that document levels of competence achieved and intentional activities leading to personal development;
- establish arenas for student-faculty interaction in social and community settings; and
- present opportunities for discussion and reflection on the meaning of all collegiate experiences.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University attends to the overall health of students through its Wellness Environment for Living and Learning. Students who participate make a commitment to a substance-free lifestyle and residence environment. Faculty and student affairs professionals co-teach a wellness forum, a one-credit course in the residence halls in which undergraduate resident advisors also assist. Additional programming emphasizes **social, physical, intellectual, career, emotional, and spiritual purpose and philosophy.** A student-run community board enables students to develop programs and to take responsibility for managing the housing experience. Campus speakers share personal experiences with substance abuse and wellness issues, and faculty and student affairs staff relate their life experiences in class discussions. The residential community, hall programs, and course curriculum encourage students to reflect on

past behaviors and to determine how new knowledge can assist them in college and in developing holistic approaches to a healthy life.

Participation in the program has increased dramatically in two years, with a significant rate of returning students and requests for additional residents. The first group of students had a significantly higher grade-point average than a control group in the beginning semester of the program.

University of Richmond (Virginia) provides a four-year experience at its women's residential college, the Women Involved in Living and Learning Program. Participants enroll in an interdisciplinary women's studies minor and in required gender-related educational programs. Goals include increasing self-awareness, self-confidence, independence, and leadership through structured educational experiences; stimulating critical thinking and analysis about gender roles and relationships; nurturing and promoting student potential and talent; fostering awareness and acceptance of difference; and providing students with curricular and co-curricular opportunities to inform and enhance academic, career, and life choices. The professional program coordinator works closely with the women's studies faculty to plan course offerings, serves on its advisory board, and teaches courses. Students complete a supervised internship and attend monthly membership meetings of a student-run organization and sponsored events that complement program goals. Events form the basis for **discussion and reflection in the courses and informally in the residence halls.**

Wellesley College's Center for Research on Women recently completed an assessment of this program using course effectiveness instruments, an annual survey to determine the overall impact, a self-esteem measure, an alumnae survey to evaluate the long-term program impact, and student focus groups. Results confirm the cumulative and developmental effects on participants. The study found the greatest effect on those who completed all four years of the program. Students and alumnae of the program speak of the transformational aspects of their involvement, the ways they learned to think critically that benefit them in diverse situations, their ability to question their own world views, and their tolerance of different viewpoints. Alumnae of the program express greater satisfaction with their undergraduate experience than non-program alumnae.

5 Learning is done by *individuals* who are intrinsically *tied to others as social beings*, interacting as competitors or collaborators, constraining or supporting the learning process, and able to enhance learning through cooperation and sharing.

The *individual and social nature of learning* has the potential for creating powerful learning environments that:

- take into account students' **personal histories and common cultures**;
- feature **opportunities for cooperative learning**, study, and shared research;
- cultivate a climate in which students see themselves as part of an **inclusive community**;
- use the **residential experience** as a resource for collaborative learning and for integrating social and academic life;
- use **school, work, home, and community** as resources for collaborative learning and for integrating social and academic life; and
- give students a chance to fathom and appreciate **human differences.**

To **relate individuals to others as social beings**, faculty and staff collaborators:

- strive to develop a campus culture where students learn to help each other;
- establish peer tutoring and student and faculty mentorship programs;
- sponsor residence hall and commuting student programs that cultivate student and faculty interaction for social and educational purposes; and
- support activities that enable students from different cultural backgrounds to experience each other's traditions.

The Program on Intergroup Relation, Conflict, and Community at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor offers undergraduate coursework and co-curricular programming in several departments, emphasizing intergroup relations and using a variety of pedagogical approaches. Beginning as a faculty initiative, the program is managed and funded by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and the Division of Student Affairs. Program features include:

- first-year departmental course seminars, linked through a faculty seminar and taught by faculty seminar and taught by faculty and student affairs teams and incorporating out-of-classroom experiences designed to build communities of students beyond the individual seminars;
- Intergroup Dialogues, two-credit courses **bringing together students from social identity groups** for intensive peer-facilitated dialogues based on integrated readings, discussions, and experiential exercises;
- facilitator training and practicum courses for Intergroup Dialogue leaders;
- advanced courses in intergroup relations in sociology and psychology;
- consultation and workshops by program staff working with university departments and offices, training programs for staff and organizations, and special campus events;
- a resource center on intergroup relations equipped with books, articles, and videos on related topics.

A current study of the program assessed a course that included required Intergroup Dialogues. The study found that the course increased students' structured thinking about racial and ethnic inequality, enabled them to apply this thinking more generally to social phenomena not explicitly covered in the course, and affected the kinds of actions students advocated in intergroup conflicts.

Portland State University (Oregon) faculty developed their general education program using research on student learning and retention and working with student affairs professionals with expertise in student learning, group dynamics, peer facilitation, and the development of community and feelings of inclusion. The program emphasizes **the integration of both affective and cognitive modes of learning** into all aspects of its classes. It strives to overcome the limited opportunity for informal learning and casual interaction characteristic of urban, commuter campuses. Features of the program include:

- CityQuest, an orientation program designed as an activity in a freshman general education course;
- a "leadership cluster" of multidisciplinary upper-division courses on leadership fulfilling general education requirements;
- student affairs fellows who teach in the "freshman inquiry" and "senior capstone" courses;
- Metro Initiative, cooperative agreements with regional community colleges that connect academic support services and general education coursework across all institutions;
- Capstone, a collaboration to facilitate service-learning within the general education curriculum; and
- Student Snapshot, a student affairs newsletter with information about students to help faculty understand students' lives.

Since implementation of the program, student retention between the first and second year has increased, the institution has developed a better sense of who its students are, and it has information on which aspects of students' learning experiences are more or less effective. Faculty are now more likely to request assistance with students from student affairs staff and to involve the staff in teaching program courses.

6 Learning is strongly *affected by the educational climate* in which it takes place: the settings and surroundings, the influences of others, and the values accorded to the life of the mind and to learning achievements.

The *educational climates* in which learning occurs best:

- value **academic and personal success** and **intellectual inquiry**;
- involve **all constituents** — faculty, students, staff, alumni, employers, family, and others — in **contributing** to student learning;
- make student learning and development an integral part of **faculty and staff responsibilities and rewards**;

- incorporate student **academic performance and development goals** into the educational mission, and assessment of progress toward them into unit performance.
- include **subcommunities** in which students feel **connected, cared for, and trusted.**

To construct an effective **educational climate**, faculty and staff collaborators:

- build a strong sense of community among all institutional constituencies;
- organize ceremonies to honor and highlight contributions to community life and educational values;
- publicly celebrate institutional values;
- articulate how each administrative and academic unit serves the institution's mission; and
- share and use information on how units are performing in relation to this mission.

The Youth in Transition Program of James Madison University (Virginia) introduces academically underprepared minority students to college life beginning in the summer prior to their freshman year. Students are supported by an intensive, **nurturing educational environment** in which they can overcome prior negative learning experiences and develop new ways to succeed in academics. The program, offered jointly by university faculty and the Office of Multicultural Student Services, continues throughout the school year. Students receive ongoing academic support, educational enrichment opportunities, and mentors. Academic progress is monitored continuously. Faculty and student affairs staff work as an instructional team, with faculty teaching basic mathematics and writing skills and staff teaching study skills and time management and addressing issues of independence and self-confidence. Students live together in residence halls to establish peer relationships and work with their advisors through all four years of college.

A study of program participants tracked their academic progress over a one-year period. Results showed an increase in the proportion of minority students in good standing over the course of the year and a decrease in the number placed on suspension. Further analysis indicated that a significant proportion of those placed on suspension were later able to return to good standing.

New Century College of George Mason University (Virginia) coordinates Collaborations: Partnerships for Active Communities, a combination of programs designed to **place students in diverse educational settings.** "Adventure learning" courses, which fulfill the college's requirement for experiential learning, include the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Bahamas Environmental Research Center, where students engage the natural environment firsthand and learn about ecology in the broadest sense, including the people and cultures that shape the environment. Courses contain both a classroom component and a co-curricular final project. Students also can enroll in skill-based short courses, in learning

communities that connect classroom study with life experiences, or in an alternative spring break through which they contribute to and learn about communities they serve. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences by developing portfolios representative of their work, providing documentation of work in progress, and presenting evidence of self-reflection on how their learning experiences have evolved.

Comparisons show that students who have participated in these programs have higher retention rates, academic performance, and satisfaction with college life than do non-participants.

7 Learning requires *frequent feedback* if it is to be sustained, *practice* if it is to be nourished, and *opportunities to use* what has been learned.

The importance to learning of *feedback, practice, and use* of knowledge and skills mandates that students be:

- expected to **meet high but achievable standards** and provided timely information on their progress toward meeting them;
- engaged in a recurring process of **correction and improvement**;
- encouraged to **take risks** and **learn from mistakes**;
- taught how to be **constructive critics** of each other's work;
- required to demonstrate their learning accomplishments through **active problem solving, applying concepts** to practical situations;
- **refining skills** through frequent use; and
- asked to **test theory against practice** and **refine theory based on practice.**

To provide **occasions to use and practice** what has been learned, faculty and staff collaborators:

- recruit students with relevant academic interests as active participants and leaders in related campus life programs and activities;
- organize work opportunities to take advantage of students' developing skills and knowledge;
- collaborate with businesses and community organizations to match students to internship and externship experiences that fit their evolving educational profiles; and
- develop student research and design projects based on actual problems or cases presented by external organizations to be resolved.

Iowa State University's College of Design and Department of Residence have created together the Design Exchange, a living and learning experience to promote academic success. The Exchange houses design students together in a learning

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community that includes a design studio and computer laboratory. The studio is available twenty-four hours a day and serves as the site of bi-weekly sessions ranging from academic survival skills to portfolio development. Sessions are facilitated by faculty, student affairs, and residence assistance staff; upper-class design students serve as peer mentors and advisors, role models, and programmers. Efforts are made to offer out-of-class activities that extend classroom learning, and to encourage informal interaction among faculty, staff, and students. First-semester survival programs are followed by more intentional faculty involvement in the second semester, during which they discuss with students such issues as design portfolios and career development. The program allows students to **create design projects and receive continual feedback** from peers and teachers. The studio space encourages this sharing on a cooperative rather than a competitive basis.

Preliminary data from a study comparing Exchange students with a control group suggest that students enrolled in the program have higher grade-point averages than design students not involved in the learning community. Students in the program also report higher levels of satisfaction with the university, a greater sense of community, and improved ability to work collaboratively to find solutions to curricular and social issues. Students surveyed cite frequent feedback and living together as major benefits of the program.

The undergraduate division of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania has a mission to educate students to become broad-minded, articulate, and effective leaders in the global marketplace. Its course on leadership and communication in groups is a collaboration between student and academic affairs designed to serve this mission. It features community service projects that provide opportunities to **develop and refine leadership skills** both inside and outside the classroom. Other cooperative experiential activities over the course of students' four-year experience include leadership retreats, mentoring programs, skill-building workshops, a leadership lecture series, the management of forty student clubs and organizations, and student-run conferences. The academic and student service partnership is supported by team advisors, trained to offer both academic advice and peer counseling. The collaboration also works to temper the highly competitive business school culture and to foster cooperative community and college leaders.

Student surveys show appreciation for the school's ability to meet their needs for leadership skills. Students evaluate the leadership retreats highly. In addition, students from the school serve an already large and increasing proportion of leadership positions in the university's student organizations.

8 Much learning *takes place informally and incidentally*, beyond explicit teaching or the classroom, in casual contacts with faculty and staff, peers, campus life, active social and community involvements, and unplanned but fertile and complex situations.

Informal and incidental learning is enhanced by:

- activities beyond the classroom that **enrich formal learning** experiences;
- an institutional climate that encourages student **interaction related to educational issues**;
- **mentorship relationships** on and off campus;
- chances for students to meet **faculty and staff in a variety of settings and circumstances**; and
- student participation as **volunteers** and **active citizens in the broader community**.

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To facilitate **informal and incidental learning**, faculty and staff collaborators:

- sponsor programs for students, faculty, and staff that serve both social and educational purposes;
- organize community service and service-learning activities performed by faculty, staff, and students together;
- design campus life programs that relate directly to specific courses;
- link students with peers and with faculty, staff, and community mentors; and
- build common gathering places for students, faculty, and staff.

The First-Year Program at the College of the Holy Cross (Massachusetts) is a thematically based academic experience for about one-fourth of the first-year class. Each year a new theme is built around the question "How then shall we live?" by connecting that question to a specific issue. The theme gives an explicit ethical focus to the year and is the touchstone for all other components of the program, including a pair of first-year courses extending through both semesters, a two-semester common reading program, a variety of co-curricular events with faculty and students, and a common residency experience. The intellectual community associated with the program encompasses classroom, studio, laboratory, performance space, faculty offices, and residence hall. The program **extends into all aspects of students' lives,** connecting the learning experience with fundamental questions about how to live, to be part of a community, and to make moral choices. The intent is to provide shared experiences that embrace the entire first-year environment and in so doing to provide a framework that **promotes informal learning.**

Student interviews and institutional records show high levels of participation in class discussion and co-curricular events, extensive discussions outside the classroom, and a strong sense of community in the residence halls. Compared with other students, First-Year participants had fewer alcohol-related incidents, received higher grades, and were more likely to assume campus leadership

positions, to participate in honors and study abroad programs, and to be active in community programs.

The University of Missouri, Columbia creates Freshmen Interest Groups of students enrolled in the same sections of three general education courses, living in the same residence halls (usually on the same floor), and enrolled in a one-semester seminar. The seminar is designed to help students integrate material from the general education courses and to **facilitate informal discussions on issues covered in the courses.** The program's objectives are to make the campus psychologically small by creating peer reference groups of students, to integrate purposefully curricular and co-curricular experiences, to stimulate early registration for related courses, and to encourage faculty to integrate course content and activities across their disciplines. Faculty and staff jointly plan the program, coordinate in- and out-of-classroom activities, and champion desired outcomes and assessment strategies to evaluate the impact of the learning experience. Shared projects and events associated with the courses are especially important for promoting opportunities for discussion. Peer advisors reinforce this learning, serve as study leaders, and use team-building approaches to increase interest group cohesion. Residence halls have been renovated to offer group study space, classrooms, and computer laboratories.

In comparison with other freshmen, students in the Freshmen Interest Groups demonstrate higher levels of interaction and involvement in college life in the first and second years, greater intellectual content in their contacts with faculty and other students, better performance in general education courses, higher grade-point averages, and higher freshmen-to-sophomore retention rates.

9 Learning is *grounded in particular contexts and individual experiences*, requiring effort to transfer specific knowledge and skills to other circumstances or to more general understandings and to unlearn personal views and approaches when confronted by new information.

The *grounded* nature of learning requires that students:

- encounter **alternative perspectives** and **others' realities**;
- grapple with educational materials that **challenge conventional views**;
- confront novel circumstances that extend beyond their own personal experiences and that require the **application of new knowledge or more general principles**; and
- **share** freely with others **experiences** that have shaped their identities.

To transform learning *grounded in particular contexts and individual experiences* into broader understandings, faculty and staff collaborators:

- sponsor events that involve students with new people and situations;
- champion occasions for interdisciplinary discourse on salient issues;
- foster dialogues between people with disparate perspectives and backgrounds; and
- expand study abroad and cultural exchange programs.

St. Lawrence University (New York) strives for a learning environment that integrates multicultural perspectives, influences, and ideas throughout the curriculum and the campus community. In its First-Year Program, students live together in residential colleges and take an intensive, year-long, interdisciplinary, team-taught thematic course in communication. Faculty members work with student affairs staff to ensure that the living and learning nature of the program **encourages students to reflect on course themes, conflicts arising in the residence hall, and connections between the themes and living experiences.** A "residential curriculum" is organized by residential coordinators, college assistants, and faculty to discuss in class and in the colleges both predictable and unique stresses in the residence communities. A residential education committee plans events and designs interventions to address student problems and conflicts. Students are expected to think through and resolve conflicts associated with differences in background, in behavior within the residence halls, and in academic perspectives. In doing so, students explore each other's personal histories, respond to others' views, and examine the relationship between individual perspectives and knowledge-based approaches.

Detailed evaluation forms ask students about the impact of living with people enrolled in a common course, the communication and research skills learned, the effects of the multidisciplinary, team-taught course, and the coverage of residential issues. Data indicate that residential goals and communications skills are being achieved. Students are positive about living with others who share their academic and personal experiences and appreciate having faculty involved in their residential lives.

University of Wisconsin, Whitewater has a mission to serve students with disabilities and has had a formal program to provide services for these students for nearly thirty years. Instructional staff accommodate students with disabilities in classrooms, labs, field work, internships, student teaching, and the workplace. A new work experience project offering academic credit has received exceptional support from faculty and students. The project brings staff into close contact with faculty, and staff work with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to organize the experience. For many severely and multiply disabled students, the work is one of the first successful validations of their capacity to succeed and to establish a strong identity. Efforts are focused on **matching students' needs with a work environment complementing their educational background** and likely to ensure success. The work is an intensive individual experience; however, the

individual learning is tied directly to interaction with others in the workplace at several levels. It helps to provide self-definition as a person and to delineate a role and status within the task group. The combination of the workplace routine, supervisory and peer feedback, and the duties of the position offer opportunities for growth and for eliminating non-functional behaviors. The program has proved particularly important for individuals whose learning styles are not conducive to transfer of knowledge from one context to another.

At the university, students with disabilities are retained at a significantly higher rate than the institutional average for all students, and they obtain employment at exceptional rates. These results compare remarkably well with national studies of retention and employment rates for disabled students.

Bowling Green State University (Ohio) created its Chapman Learning Center as a "think tank for learning," to experiment with new pedagogies and program structures to engage students in classroom and outside-the-classroom activities. A freshmen residential program, the Center involves faculty from several disciplines, each with offices in the residence hall, a hall director and junior tutors who work with faculty on required anchor courses, elective courses, and a common learning day. Classes are thematically linked in two anchor courses each semester, and center on difficult social issues during the first term and on aesthetics and imagination during the second. Freshmen composition courses are linked to these disciplinary courses. Community events are planned to relate directly to the course themes. Teaching practices emphasize interactive, experiential activities, learning experiences outside the classroom, **critical thinking about challenging issues,** and support for learning by residential staff. Classes are small, to enable faculty to offer frequent written and verbal feedback on in-class and out-of-class assignments. Students are encouraged to **examine personal beliefs and values** in relation to broader perspectives on social issues, and peer-mediated discussions of social controversies are featured.

Chapman students show disproportionate satisfaction and adjustment to college life when compared with other freshmen. They feel less lonely, are more actively involved in their classes, experience more faculty approval, and are more willing to approach faculty.

10 Learning involves *the ability of individuals to monitor their own learning*, to understand how knowledge is acquired, to develop strategies for learning based on discerning their capacities and limitations, and to be aware of their own ways of knowing in approaching new bodies of knowledge and disciplinary frameworks.

To improve the ability of individuals to *monitor* their *own learning* requires that faculty and staff:

- assist students in **understanding the elements and structures of learning** and the **standards for learning achievements;**
- help students understand their **relative strengths and weaknesses** in learning;
- ask students to observe and record their own **progress in learning**;
- use **multiple pedagogies** suited to the content or skills to be learned and reaching students with different approaches to learning;
- **tailor** education to the **individual learner** rather than exclusively providing mass-delivered presentations;
- use **educational technologies** as a tool for **collaborative learning** and encourage reticent students to participate;
- cultivate students' **desire to know what** they **do not know**; and
- continue to learn what **factors affect student cognition and learning** and to design learning **experiences responsive to learning differences**.

To enable students to **monitor their own learning**, faculty and staff collaborators:

- help them delineate and articulate their learning interests, strengths, and deficiencies;
- reduce the risk to students of acknowledging their own limitations;
- help students select curricular and other educational experiences covering a broad range of learning approaches and performance evaluations; and
- create faculty and staff development activities to learn about advances in learning theory and practice.

The Western College Program of Miami University, Oxford (Ohio) is an interdisciplinary residential college featuring a core curriculum in the liberal arts for students' first two years. In their junior year, students are provided opportunities to take greater responsibility for, and to monitor, their learning through individually designed upper-level interdisciplinary programs of study and a year-long senior project based on all four years of study. Completed senior projects are publicly presented using a professional conference format and including faculty respondents from outside the college who have not worked with the students. Faculty and student affairs staff collaborate to fuse the living and study experiences and to challenge and support students as they pursue their core and self-designed studies.

The Student Affairs Assessment Committee, comprising student affairs, academic affairs, and business affairs staff, documents the impact that the university is having on students inside and outside the classroom. Measures include quantitative, nationally normed outcome assessment instruments and qualitative evaluations based on student interviews, free writing, focus groups, portfolios of student work, and ethnographies.

The vice presidents for academic and student affairs at William Rainey Harper College (Illinois) established a joint "Statement of Student Success" that endorses two concepts: all students have the right to succeed, and the college has the right to uphold high standards for achievement. Based on this statement, the college established a program to support students at this two-year open-door college with academic preparation and counseling services as a way to meet the college's standards and to help them attain success. The college developed five standards of academic performance, established requirements for entry into college-level courses based on level of preparation as determined by entrance tests, and coupled these actions with an "intrusive intervention" program administered by the student development office. The intervention program monitors student course taking and grades. Through computerized tracking and human interaction, students receive information on their progress and work with faculty and staff to create personalized success contracts. These contracts include academic, personal, developmental, and social strategies to assist students making decisions about college and careers. Individual students' strategies are recorded and tracked through a computerized interface with the registration system, allowing possible restrictions to course loads or future registrations, or triggering further interventions when performance falls below standards. Interventions are made by faculty and staff, and students are **asked to assess their own performance** and to learn ways to use the support system to assist them.

Survey results over the years document that at-risk students enrolled in the intervention program have a clear understanding of the academic system, know what factors result in low grades, have reasonable plans to improve their performance, and believe the required interventions will have a positive impact on their future academic success.

What We Have Learned

Collaborative Futures in Support of Learning

The evolving principles of learning, continually informed by future advances in our understanding and knowledge of the learning process, hold great promise for improved student learning. By applying these principles to the practice of teaching, the development of curricula, the design of learning environments, and the assessment of learning, we will achieve more powerful learning. Realizing the full benefit of these applications depends upon collaborative efforts between academic and student affairs professionals — and beyond. It will require attention and action by all those affiliated with our institutions as well as by members of the larger community concerned with higher education to ensure that we achieve our mission of increased higher learning.

We call all those who serve the goals of learning to contribute to these collaborations. We ask that:

Students take charge of their own learning and organize their educational programs to include a broad array of experiences both inside and outside the classroom; become aware of the cumulative nature of their education, and consequently plan and monitor their development; and establish personal relationships with faculty and staff as an essential part of their education.

Faculty become masters of cognitive studies; develop pedagogy and curricula that draw upon and embody learning principles; become involved in all aspects of their institution's community life; and work in partnership with staff and community supporters to create learning activities based on the learning principles.

Scholars of cognition share their findings widely with faculty colleagues and higher education audiences and be attentive in their writings to the application of new findings to the conduct of teaching and learning.

Administrative leaders rethink the conventional organization of colleges and universities to create more inventive structures and processes that integrate academic and student affairs; align institutional planning, hiring, rewards, and resource allocations with the learning mission; offer professional development opportunities for people to cooperate across institutional boundaries; use evidence of student learning to guide program improvement, planning and resource allocation; and communicate information on students' life circumstances and culture to all members of the college or university community.

Student affairs professionals and other staff take the initiative to connect to each other and to academic units; develop programs that purposefully incorporate and identify learning contributions; and help students to view their education holistically and to participate fully in the life of the institution and the community.

Alumni reflect upon how what they learned in college contributed to their life after graduation and share these observations with current students and institutional officials; provide learning opportunities and mentorships outside the classroom for students; and contribute financial support to programs offering students the chance to use their knowledge in a variety of settings.

Governing boards understand the learning enterprise and how the institution conducts it; ask senior managers for information on how the organizational structure supports learning and for evidence of learning outcomes; and reward contributions to learning through promotion and tenure decisions and in evaluation of the president.

Community supporters volunteer workplace and other organizational venues for student learning; team with faculty and staff to design learning experiences in the community or workplace; serve as supervisors and mentors for student learning activities; evaluate student performance and provide models of reflective practice in their own professions; and help colleges and universities to understand the skills and knowledge needed by their graduates.

Accrediting agencies require in their review processes evidence of how institutions integrate learning experiences across administrative units and demand measures of learning effectiveness.

Professional associations disseminate best practices of collaboration on behalf of student learning in their programs, publications, and awards; exemplify the importance of partnerships for learning by establishing cooperative programs with other associations; and emphasize learning as a field of knowledge essential for graduate students planning careers in colleges or universities.

Families help students select a college or university based on its commitments to learning and student development and its learning environment; encourage students to choose and participate in a comprehensive program of educational activities throughout their collegiate experience; and help students to understand the value of reflection and to find time for concentrated study in their complicated lives.

Government agencies sponsor research and development on learning; offer incentives to institutions for new initiatives focused on collaboration for learning; and require evidence of institutional assessment of learning.

All those involved in higher education, as professionals or as community supporters, view themselves as teachers, learners, and collaborators in service to learning.

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